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Rural Areas Development

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Suggestions for

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ASCS AND RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT

The average income of each American living on a farm is only 59 percent as much as the income of persons not living on farms—with about one-half the farm families having a yearly income of less than \$3,000. The under-employment and unemployment in rural areas is the equivalent of some 4 million unemployed. Rural Areas Development is aimed at improving these and related conditions.

ASCS, through the use of its programs and through the efforts and judgment of ASC committeemen and their staffs, has a major opportunity and responsibility in Rural Areas Development.

This publication illustrates, through examples, some of the ways by which ACSC programs have been adapted and used to help meet the particular needs of individuals and communities, and thereby contribute to economic development.

The illustrations are in addition to the tremendous economic benefit to farmers and rural communities from ASCS price support and supply adjustment programs that are available in every agricultural county. ASC committeemen regularly contribute to Rural Areas Development through their responsibility to adapt programs to local conditions.

The examples shown are intended to encourage and help committees and their staffs in every county adapt and use ASCS programs and other resources in the Rural Areas Development effort.

Issued May 1964

RAD OBJECTIVES

In March 1961, Secretary Freeman responded to local development efforts and local needs by coordinating the programs of the Department of Agriculture for Rural Areas Development. One of the major objectives of Rural Areas Development is to improve the serious problems of low income caused by unemployment and underemployment in rural areas.

A number of changes were made in the organization of the Department and special assignments were made to various agencies. The RAD Board was established to provide overall direction to this all-out effort to help those in rural areas who were benefiting but little from the major programs of the Department or from the total economic growth of the country.

Reaching Objective

The overall objective was expected to be reached largely through:

- Better conservation use and management of the land, water, woodland, and labor resources of underemployed rural families.
- Development of opportunities for nonfarm employment in local areas by establishing new industries or expanding existing business enterprises.
- Educational and training programs that would prepare the unemployed and underemployed rural people for nonfarm employment.

ASCS Has Similar Objectives

The objectives of the various programs which ASCS administers are similar to some of those of Rural Areas Development. All new methods that will be employed to reach these objectives supplement and are in addition to the resources that have previously been available to assist local people.

ASCS RESOURCES IMPORTANT TO RAD

The ASCS has tremendous and varied resources useful in accomplishing economic progress in every agricultural community of this country. These resources have been contributing to economic development for years. The Rural Areas Development effort should help to make them more effective.

They include:

- An organization reaching every rural community.
- Information that has been accumulated through the years that can be useful to RAD committees in planning overall economic development programs and in selecting practical projects to be carried out to implement the programs.
- The judgment of ASC committeemen who are farm leaders and their staffs, when made available to RAD committees, is invaluable

in making decisions on projects required for economic progress in agriculture.

- A variety of programs, all of which contribute to economic progress and stability and to more efficient use of the manpower and natural resources of farm people. Some of these programs are subject to adjustments, to better adapt them to local conditions. All of them can be made more effective through a fuller use and participation by eligible producers.

As an ASC committeeman or ASCS employee you may have wondered what your part or that of ASCS should be in Rural Areas Development.

Area development is the result of the sum total of improvements on individual farms, in businesses and industrial plants, together with the community projects carried out in the area.

Although the following examples do not in every case point out how they benefit the economy, they do illustrate how ASCS programs contribute to more rapid economic development.

ACP ADAPTED, SERVED MORE FARMERS IN MACON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

This case illustrates ways the Agricultural Conservation Program can be adapted and operated so as to reach and assist farmers who have not been reached by USDA programs.

The situation in Macon County, Tennessee, in 1958 was similar to that in many other rural areas—small farms with about half the farmers having gross incomes of less than \$1,200. Dairying and burley tobacco were the chief sources of income. A few farmers produced wheat, general livestock, and carried out other miscellaneous farming enterprises.

About one-fifth of the farmers used all of the available ACP cost-sharing funds each year to help solve their conservation problems and thus the management of their soil and water resources. However, between 400 and 500 farm families in the county apparently had not used the ACP or the other available agricultural programs and services.

Motivating Farmers—the Big Job

A major problem was how to interest, motivate, and assist farmers in this group to undertake needed conservation projects which would benefit the family and introduce them to other services they so badly needed, and yet continue to help farmers already interested.

About 1,700 farmers were selling milk from an average of $4\frac{1}{2}$ cows to the farm. About 18,000 acres of cropland were idle each year with a few acres on most farms. The land is rolling to steep, with some bottom lands. Much of the bottom land needed drainage. The county had been selected in 1956 as one of the pilot rural development counties.

Considerable progress had been achieved in developing new sources of off-farm employment. However, there were many low-income farmers who were unable to get off-farm jobs. Something had to be done to boost their incomes.

More and Better Grass Needed

The best opportunity appeared to be through the establishment of improved protective vegetative cover on idle land, pasture land, and part of that land used for row crops. The cover would be available for livestock. There existed an unfilled demand for additional milk.

It was the consensus of the local leaders, however, that the lagging farmers were not financially able to carry out the needed conservation projects at the rate of ACP cost-sharing then in effect for the county.

It was agreed that the starting point to assist these families would be to help them establish grasses and legumes on a reasonable acreage of their cropland. It was decided to request that the cost-share rate on the A-2 permanent vegetative cover or pasture practice be raised to 80 percent of cost for the first five acres established on the farm.

Higher ACP Rates Offered Beginners

The ASC State committee approved this and agreed to allocate some extra ACP funds to the county provided the leaders would meet the following requirements:

- The ASC county committee would match the extra funds, dollar for dollar, from the regular ACP county allocation—and would use this money only for approving cost-shares for not more than 5 acres of the A-2 vegetative cover practice, for farms that had not been assisted with this practice within five years.
- The group of leaders would develop an educational and promotional program to personally contact those who had not been doing conservation work and interest them in undertaking a worthwhile project.
- The group would develop a follow-up plan to maintain personal contact with and assist those who became interested in using other needed available services.

A key point in this program was the personal contacts made by committeemen and other leaders and the follow-up with individuals who were approved for ACP assistance.

In 1959, the first year of this approach, 126 farmers established improved vegetative cover under this offer.

Program Expanded After Successful First Year

In 1960 and 1961 an increased cost-share rate for a limited amount of two additional practices was added to the county program. These increases

applied to the first livestock water facility approved for cost-sharing on the farm and the liming of ten acres of land in preparation for the establishment of improved vegetative cover. The rate of cost-sharing was 65 percent of the cost of these practices.

In 1960, 111 additional farmers carried out one or more of the three practices and received the increased cost-share rates. In 1961, 51 more farmers used this special offer to accomplish needed conservation work.

288 Farmers Started in Conservation

Thus, within three years 288 farmers who had not been using the ACP or other programs had carried out one or more constructive projects and had become acquainted with services of other agencies. A start had been made in laying the foundation for improved farm income.

Most of those who began a conservation program are moving ahead and making real progress. This approach is now reaching and assisting many others.

NAVAJO WOOL INCENTIVE PROGRAM AND CCC EMERGENCY FEED GRAIN

Wool and lamb production is a basic and essential industry on the Navajo Indian Reservation (Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah), for cash or credit and food. Yet the quality of both wool and animals has long been very low, and income to the Indian stockman's family has generally been on a bare existence basis.

The Navajo Tribal Council, with the full support and cooperation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, has in recent years developed several programs to benefit the families and their "communities." These included programs on health, education, community center developments, water management and facilities (often with ACP cost-sharing assistance and BIA educational and technical assistance), and livestock improvement and marketing.

The livestock programs have included the rental or sale of improved rams to Indian stockmen, lamb shows, wool schools, and a purchase offer to eliminate inferior animals.

The educational efforts of BIA, the Tribal Council, the State Universities, local community "chapter" leaders, and some of the Indian traders (trading post operators), have included a strong effort to get each sheep owner to understand the benefit from the ASCS wool and lamb incentive payments.

Wool Incentives Key to Livestock Improvement

Overall, 5-year totals for three Arizona counties from incentive payments are: Apache, wool \$428,785, lambs \$37,623; Coconino, wool \$417,820, lambs \$60,242; Navajo, wool \$254,290, lambs \$17,583.

The incentive payments contributed much more than just that many dollars to the people and economy of the area.

These payments have been a principal means of contact to get the Navajos interested in the entire livestock improvement program, and have provided some extra, stabilizing income, and in some cases the source of funds for renting or buying better breeding stock. To illustrate, the 1960 program wool and lamb incentive payments were \$123,119 to 3,211 Indian sheep owners in Apache County, Arizona.

Emergency Feed Grain Saved Flocks

In a period of unusual drought in 1959, the Navajo Reservation was declared a disaster area, and CCC surplus grain supplied under ASCS's Disaster Relief Feed Grain Program helped to save many flocks. This protected the food supply and income of the individual Navajo families and benefited the small businesses of their community centers.

SEVERAL PROGRAMS GIVE LIFT TO TREASURE COUNTY, MONTANA

An example of a county in which ASCS programs were utilized in a number of ways is in Treasure County, Montana.

A reduction of acreage under the wheat adjustment program and the extended use of irrigation bringing greater sugar beet returns changed the agriculture picture in this county to a great extent. More barley was planted, but both barley and feeder cattle were shipped to distant feed lots outside the State.

Entire Economy Boosted by Programs

Greater marketing and economic stability were brought about through ASCS wheat and barley price supports and the Sugar Program. The ASCS Storage Facility Loan Program helped county farmers and ranchers to hold grain for more orderly use and marketing, and a small local grain elevator added a large bin for commercial storage for other farmers.

Through judicious use of ACP cost-sharing to reorganize farm irrigation systems for water conservation, draining and managing water on wet fields, etc., more pastures and additional feed, including corn silage preserved in pit silos, became available locally.

Also, with more stability in sugar beet production under the Sugar Program, a mill for pelleting beet pulp for livestock feed is now a great asset to the county. It provides a stable source of home grown feed not previously available.

New Industry Increased Employment

Directly related to these ASCS program benefits, a growing feeder cattle

and fat cattle-feed lot industry has established itself in Treasure County, based on home-grown feed and cattle. Direct and dramatic impact of this new agricultural activity on the local economy is attested to by local farmers and ranchers, businessmen, bankers, and others.

SOIL RETENTION THROUGH ACP IN CASS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

A classic example of the benefits to be derived from systematic, judicious use of ACP is to be found in a 240-acre farm in Cass County, Nebraska, which was improved in the decade from 1948 to 1958 from a heavily-eroded, washing farm to a conservation prize winner.

The farmer's conservation plan called for extensive removal of fences, construction of terraces and sod waterways, and liming and reseeding of fields. This was accomplished, as were three to five-year rotation practices for legumes and grasses, and five to 10-year pasture seedings.

ACP Helped Get A Good Job Done

Through ACP, from 1951 to 1959, more than 16 miles of terraces have been constructed, adequate sod waterways have been established—usually replacing a deep “gullied” ditch—two erosion control dams have been built, approximately 200 acres of cropland have been limed and seeded to legumes or grass, and 20 acres of wasteland have been restored.

The farmer says, “It would have been impossible to have attained the goal by now, had it not been for the ACP cost-sharing through the ASCS county office . . . and the related technical assistance.”

The elimination or reduction of gullies and reconstruction of waterways means that now farm machinery can be operated freely throughout the farm.

Conservation Increased Income

One index of improved income from the farm is indicated by the 225 fat hogs and 25 head of cattle produced in 1950, as compared with more than 400 fat hogs and 115 head of cattle in 1961.

As is often the case in a conservation or general improvement program on a single farm, the effects are felt on surrounding farms, and in a broader sense, throughout the community's group effort at rural area development.

Results Inspired Others

In this particular instance, the family constructed a new home befitting the conservation development and higher income level of the farm, and after the erection of the two erosion control dams, it was possible to construct another dam on the adjoining farm to further control the flow of

water. This farm has served as an inspiration to other farmers much in need of conservation practices on their farms.

To tie a ribbon on the whole package, this farm was the State winner of the Goodyear Conservation Farm of the Year Award in 1958.

ACP POOLING AGREEMENTS USED IN COLLETON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

An excellent example of the concrete results that can quickly accrue from an ACP water management pooling agreement is to be found among a group of Negro farmers in Colleton County, South Carolina, where tobacco and cotton income was doubled, and the production of food crops made safer.

When the Colleton ASC county committee initiated the ACP for 1958, they earmarked \$5,000 for pooling agreements, and agricultural agency personnel in the county were urged to be on the alert for conservation problems that could best be solved through cooperating group effort.

Too Much Water—the Key Problem

The Negro extension agent, through a visit with a local community leader, learned that the greatest single generally recognized need in that community was some means of getting rid of the excessive water which normally stood on 75 percent of the land in the community during several months of each year.

At a meeting with the farmers in the area, all seemed aware of the need for getting rid of the excess water. However, many were dubious of the pooling agreement proposal, as none of them had the money to pay his part of the cost, and, of course, at that point did not know how much the individual share would be.

Flood Led to Action

A small flood two days later was given a lion's share of the credit for crystallizing group opinion in favor of the project, and a cost-share formula was worked out, predicated on the amount of acreage that would be involved by the individual participant.

On the basis of a technical survey, it was determined that the need was actually for two outlet ditches, and the project was divided into two pooling agreements.

The first, including 12 farms, had a drainage ditch approximately two miles long, requiring 11,000 cubic yards of earth removal. The second affected eight farms and called for a drainage ditch 1.3 miles long, and requiring 7,300 cubic yards of earth removal.

ACP Sparked Community Cooperation

Total cost of the two projects was \$5,145, at an average cost-share apportionment of just under \$108 for each of 17 participants, whose affected acreage averaged 41. Included in the overall cost is the value of labor performed by the participating farmers.

The problem of financing was solved in relatively short order, when a local bank, two private lenders, the PCA, and FHA learned what was involved, and the benefits that would result.

The project value is demonstrated by the comment of one participant: "We all feel that the ditch paid for itself the first year."

FARM, COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM ACP IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Very material benefits on a Jefferson County, Washington, dairy farm have been realized from conservation work done through ACP, and in so doing the farmer has become an agricultural leader in his community and county.

Since he took over the 240-acre farm in 1950, the improvements include an addition of 20 acres suitable for hay production, with plans for another 20 acres, 80 acres reseeded to permanent grass, 6,300 lineal feet of open drainage ditches dug, 2,106 lineal feet of tile drainage laid, 400 square yards of rock and log revetment, plus 1,000 cubic yards of earth removal in stream channel alignment.

The carrying capacity of his forage has increased from barely 40 head of cows to 60 head, plus 115 head of young cattle.

Benefits Triggered Efforts by Others

Of even more significance, from the standpoint of Rural Areas Development itself, is the farmer's own leadership ability, which has progressed steadily. He has been an alternate member of the ASC county committee, a soil conservation district supervisor, and is a director in the Evergreen North West Breeders Association.

And, of course, the dramatic improvements on his farm through ACP has triggered similar efforts by neighboring farmers to do likewise, creating an ever-widening circle of protected and improved farms—an excellent Rural Areas Development effect.

ASC Letter Led to First Contact

When he took over the farm from his father, the farmer faced four immediately apparent problems:

- Excessively wet land as a result of very poor drainage on the lower levels.

- Poor pasture and hay land, with heavy infestation of weeds.
- Insufficient forage acreage to carry enough dairy cattle to make a living.
- A rapidly flowing stream from hill land nearby that was eroding and severely cutting into the two best fields on the farm.

At the time the farmer assumed operation of the farm, he was added to the ACP mailing list in the Jefferson County ASCS office. When notified of the availability of the ACP in his county, the farmer contacted the office to see what part ACP could and would play in helping him solve his soil and water conservation problems.

Program Brings Economic Benefits to Community

With technical help provided by the local soil conservation district he prepared a basic farm plan (since revised twice), and with help from the county extension agent he selected the best grasses and legumes necessary to expand his dairy operation into an economical unit.

He gives major credit to ACP cost-sharing for making it economically possible for him to carry out these improvements to his holdings.

The farm now contributes to the economy of the area having become a steady consumer of goods and services as well as a producer of commodities to be processed and handled in the business community.

GRAIN CONDITIONING, STORAGE LOANS IN NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE

The grain producer without adequate commercial storage or farm drying and storage facilities has a perennial problem. He is forced to put his grain on the market at or shortly after harvesting, at a time when the market is glutted and prices are low. He can not utilize and directly benefit from the available price-support program.

This problem has been solved to a great extent by a New Castle County, Delaware, grain producer, through use of the ASCS Farm Storage Facility Loan Program, to provide storage and drying facilities. He also has plans for more of the same.

In Delaware, as in most States, there is as yet little on-the-farm storage for corn, none for small grain, and little commercial storage for small grain, none for corn.

In this particular instance, the farmer realized that he was at the mercy of the prevailing market at harvest time. A bumper crop in 1956 required that he begin harvest earlier than usual, which meant higher moisture and consequent sharper reductions from the quoted daily prices.

Storage Facility Loan Solved Problem

Then he learned of and developed a plan to use the Farm Storage

Facility Loan Program. The ASC county committee reviewed his on-farm storage and dryer plans and urged him to go ahead. The county committee approved an application for three bins at \$1,808 each, and a mobile dryer of 280 bushels capacity at \$2,640.

By 1958, two years later, the farmer had paid off the dryer loan. By this time his financial status was considerably improved. He obtained another loan of \$3,900 and traded for a 360-bushel dryer.

The storage facilities have paid off. The farmer can now safely start his corn harvest much earlier, and can safely handle moisture contents of 30 per cent or higher.

Farmer Now Chooses Day to Sell Grain

His bins are so arranged that the mobile dryer does not have to be moved, improving the efficiency of his efforts from a time-and-motion standpoint. He can fill any of the five storage bins by elevator directly from his dryer unloading bin.

The farmer says that his storage facilities are not nearly enough, but they do enable him to choose the day he wants to market, and he is not so completely at the mercy of market or individual buyer. He gets "old corn" prices from millers and feed processors shortly after harvest, because of the low moisture level, but usually at the end of harvest he fills his bins and waits for a favorable market.

If he is short of funds, he uses a Commodity Credit Corporation price-support loan through the ASCS county office.

Added Income Stimulates Economy

The answer in this case obviously would not apply in every storage-shortage situation. Average production must warrant use of the sheller and dryer needed for on-farm storage. In this case, the farm comprised 1,470 acres, a corn base of 277 acres, 570 acres in cropland, 100 in permanent pasture.

Since the farmer now has more control of the time and conditions under which he markets his grain the added income available is a stimulant to the economic life of the area.